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ABSTRACT

Schools are currently being asked to serve as a catalyst for change with respect to problems confronting children and families in the United States. A problem solving approach has been articulated in the national educational goals set forth in the America 2000 program, involving schools in a restructuring movement which calls for school personnel to have the personality attributes of flexibility, resilience, risk taking, collaboration, communication, and rejection of conventional stereotypes. The position of this paper is that studies of personality attributes of administrators, teachers, and counselors are lacking. The paper advocates that research studies be conducted, yielding information which can be utilized to enhance current practice and assist in preparation of career school personnel. Four major areas are discussed: (1) the significance of the interface between psychology and education; (2) a review of the literature on personality measures; (3) the nature of gender which may be associated with different educational roles; and (4) issues of obtaining participants and achieving a fit among sample size, statistical techniques, and sophistication of the findings desired. (LL)

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Whatever happened to personality studies of school personnel?

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Running head: PERSONALITY STUDIES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

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ABSTRACT

The position of this paper is that studies of personalities of administrators, teachers, counselors, etc. are lacking. We may be missing valuable information that could be used to enhance current practice and to assist in preparation of career school personnel.

First, the significance of the interface between psychology and education lies in the study of educational psychology. The empirical orientation of psychology and the practical orientation of education must both be addressed to optimize opportunity.

Secondly, the dearth of research in this area is striking. Literature search on the personality measures, a bi-directional search of the literature--from personality measures to school personnel and vice versa--yielded only two broad-based studies in the past decade or so.

Thirdly, attention apparently has not been given to the nature of gender roles which may be associated with different educational roles. Some gender role issues among career educators are discussed in this paper.

Lastly, issues of obtaining participants and achieving a fit among sample size(s), statistical techniques, and sophistication of the findings desired were addressed.

Whatever Happened to Personality Studies of School Personnel?

Almost invariably, employers express interest in "knowing something about the person" being considered for employment. We consider that this is "common knowledge" with respect to employers of teachers, administrators, counselors, and other school personnel. Concern is expressed for information beyond that which shows on a college transcript. Information is sought from references. Employers want to know "what kind of person" this is. In both naive and systematic ways we express interest in the personality attributes of persons with whom we may expect a professional relationship.

Educational psychologists appropriately trained should be involved in the study of personality of individuals in the school setting. Historically, educational psychology as a sub-discipline has existed somewhere between psychology and education. This "space between" has been described as having "...experienced the crosscurrents and whirlpools often created when two great oceans meet" (Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1990).

Psychologists tend have a research orientation. Psychology as a discipline is devoted to theory building. It is in the tradition of science. Education, on the other hand tends toward an agenda of practice. The practical world and applied knowledge is foremost. Certainly, some educational psychologists will

prefer a theory and research orientation while some others will prefer a practice orientation. Neither is necessarily better although the status ascribed by society as well as the contingencies of practice versus research may be different (Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1990).

As a practical way of ascertaining the interests and direction of efforts by educational psychologists, one may address the kind of literature they produce. Textbooks-presumably written by some of the best in the field-almost invariably include material that in someway addresses personality variables of persons in the "learning environment." Good and Brophy (1990) devoted a chapter to social and personal development which is based, to a reasonable extent, on personality theory. Moreover, they devote several pages to "teacher expectations" and consequent effects. Robinson (1990) addressed "characteristics of effective teachers." While much of this material may stretch the concept of personality attributes, it does highlight concern for personal-characteristics. Glover and Bruning (1990) gave early (in their book) attention to effective teachers. Addressing the interface between the profession of education and the science of psychology they stated "Teaching is both an art and a science. A complex, demanding profession, it combines artistry and scientific knowledge" (p. 5). Biehler and Snowman (1990) addressed some personality theory in their section on development. Moreover, they conceptualized the "teacher-practitioner" and the "teacher-theories" (pp. 21-

25); surely one person may fulfill both roles, not necessarily equally well nor with equal enthusiasm.

Professional literature in the realm of educational psychology does address some areas of teacher characteristics and consequent effects on the teachers' professional roles. This body of literature seems insufficient, though, in considering a broad-based personality profile on professional and aspiring professional educators and effects on role behavior.

Self-perception of basic role definitions has been addressed (Brophy & Evertson, 1976). Role definitions were then distinguished for effective and ineffective teachers. Efficacy perceptions of educators has been studied with behavioral distinctions between persons with perceptions of high efficacy and persons with low efficacy perceptions. The high efficacy group focused on instructing students and interacting with them; the low efficacy group focused on rule enforcement and behavior management (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Good and Brophy (1990) reviewed some material on teachers' perception of self as an agent of socialization and as an authority figure. Brophy and Putnam (1979) identified the socialization agent role as including the characteristics of patience and determination, acceptance, and firm but flexible limits. In addition, behavioral and perceptual attributes were identified. Teacher as an authority figure has been described more from the perspective of students' perceptions of teacher

role than from the perspective of the teachers' own role perceptions (Nash, 1976; Metz, 1978).

Student attitude has been found linked to measure of teacher warmth (Evertson, Anderson, Anderson, & Brophy, 1980). Significantly, however, was the finding that achievement outcomes were lower with a negative emotional climate, but not necessarily extremely high with a positive emotional climate.

A considerable body of literature has focused on teacher expectancy effects and the "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968; Brophy, 1983; Brophy & Good, 1974; Cooper & Good, 1983; Dusek, 1988). The general factors involved included

> (1) an originally unjustified expectation, (2) behaviors that consistently communicate that expectation, and (3) evidence that the original expectation has been confirmed (Good & Brophy, 1990, p. 444).

Evidence does converge to the end that teachers, and certainly others in the educational setting, do have an effect on student affect, behavior, and achievement (Brophy & Good, 1986). The extent to which these latter effects are consistent with the goals of education is being studied as referenced above. Perhaps the time is right for first focusing on personality attributes of persons in the educational setting and proceeding to potential differential effects these may have on target concerns.

There is a wealth of research on the differences of attributes of males and females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1979). But there is a dearth of research on personality attributes of males and females who choose education as their careers and choose to remain in education at the school district level.

This seems an appropriate time for this kind of research because many people are asking schools to serve as a catalyst for change in regard to the problems confronting the children in our country. The problems of these children have exacerbated in recent years, and today statistics indicate that the "wheel is broken," that our children's needs are not being met, and that the very fabric of our country is in danger if we don't address the needs of our children and families in an honest and forthright way (Havighurst, 1989; Johnson, Collins, Dupuis, & Johansen, 1991; Musgrove, 1980). These statistics have been highlighted in the Congressional hearings on the Child Welfare and Prevention Services Act (Senate Bill #6), which was introduced in the Senate in January 1991.

What is interesting about the disclosures given at these hearings is the different approach that these hearings have presented in regard to the fixing of what is wrong with education in this country. The critics of the elementary and secondary educational systems in the past have been directing very pointed criticism against the modus operendum of the these systems. In fact, the report entitled A Nation at Risk (National Commission

on Excellence in Education, 1982) depicted schools as sick institutions, institutions whose performance was endangering the very fabric of our nation. Many educators who were working diligently with limited financial support and in many instances minimal community support were astounded that the schools would be singled out as that factor in society that was causing our nation to be a "nation at risk." But testimonies given before Congressional committees have not agreed with this approach. These testimonies depict problems and solutions in education in the terms of larger problems in our society.

In education this approach to solving the problems in our schools has been articulated in the national educational goals compiled in the publication entitled America 2000 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991). These goals also represent a systems approach to addressing the needs of America's children and families. This type of approach maintains that not just one institution is at fault or needs fixing but rather more generally that our society does not meet the needs of its families and children and that needs fixing. This is the wheel that is broken, the wheel which is that part of our society that builds strong, healthy, educated people who can be productive and competitive in a global society and a world market. This wheel has many spokes; the educational system in this country is just one of the spokes.

As a part of a response to this systems approach to solving the problems in education, schools are involved in the restructuring movement in education. This movement advocates a different kind of school to be implemented in America. It is a school that is made up of a community of learners (The Holmes Group, 1986) and in keeping with a systems approach to meeting the needs of children, this education paradigm recognizes the community of learners as a community which includes not only schools but also parents, businesses, service and health agencies, colleges, and universities (Mojkowski, 1991). With this paradigm in place, restructured schools will be learning communities where all members-teachers, administrators, parents, as well as students-grow and develop through the work of learning.

Leadership in these restructured school will be defined in different terms from those in the past; personality attributes of leaders and teachers that have been valued by many schools in the past are different from those that will be valued in restructured schools. For instance, the Institute for Educational Leadership (1991) defines leaders in restructured schools in terms of flexibility and resilience, risk taking, collaboration, communication, and rejection of conventional stereotypes.

For many teachers and administrators in education, these represent enormous changes, and resistance can be expected. Research indicates that to lessen this resistance, the changees need to develop their own understanding of the need for the

changes. But in addition, the changees also need to understand their feelings about the changes and what can be done about these feelings (Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1961). Research that focuses on personality profiles of practitioners can help these practitioners have such an understanding.

The gender issue of this position paper concerns itself with the fact that sex typing of school administrators combined with sex role socialization serves to discourage women from becoming administrators (Schmuck, 1975). Many women prepare for and enter careers in education, but they are less likely than men to express a desire to be school administrators (Klein, 1985). Even women in administration admit they were reluctant to seek their positions (Gross & Trask, 1976; Schmuck, 1975). Among principals, women are less likely than men to aspire to positions beyond the principalship (Gross & Trask, 1976). Although the numbers of women in education administration have remained essentially unchanged since 1980 (Edson, 1988), the number of women earning doctorates in educational administration and supervision has increased from fourteen percent of all doctorates early in 1976 to thirty-seven percent in 1982 (Jones & Montenegro, 1982). Among these women there seems to be a resistance to the status quo that men will naturally command the top administrative positions (Woo, 1985).

Clearly the gender structure of school administration has not changed enough to accommodate the expectations of women

seeking higher levels of administrative responsibility (Fauth, 1984). But since the restructuring of our schools calls for a change in leadership styles, the need for research that is directed toward identifying the rationale involved in imposing gender roles to certain administrative positions is clear.

An analysis of personality attributes of educational workers and a study of the differential effects that these attributes have on target concerns is an attempt to be a part of this type of action-oriented research. This type of research may help change sex typing and sex role socialization which has contributed to institutionalizing sex inequity in public school administration (Shakeshaft, 1989).

The dearth of research in this area is indicative of the difficulty in acquiring the data needed for this kind of research project. Personal contact with practitioners at different levels of educational responsibility seems to be the most effective way of enlisting support for this type of project. One can only speculate about reasons for this difficulty, but some of the reasons seem to be the following: practitioners are not interested in this type of research because it is not perceived as helping to achieve immediate gains, practitioners are insensitive to the social good that might be accrued through change, and some practitioners don't perceive change in positive terms.

Also, many educators may have their "plates full" and are more concerned with survival than growth. They have become

entrenched in what they perceive as the status quo. In part this may be due to the internal and external threats to education that they already perceive. These threats have centered around such issues as national testing, consolidation, and implementation of a voucher system.

Certainly the importance of the difficulty of collecting data does not need to be minimized. If change in education is to take place, the doors of the schools need to be opened wide, and these doors can only be opened by the practitioners inside.

We seek a sample size for the project would be the optimal fit to the appropriate statistical probability (significance) levels, but the methodology for this project does not require complicated statistical procedures. Descriptive statistics will be used to give meaningful information about the different groups of practitioners (e.g. teachers, administrators, and counselors). In order to put this data in context, comparisons will be made between groups (e.g. teachers and administrators, administrators and counselors, and between counselors and teachers) and within groups (e.g. male and female teachers, counselors and administrators).

As action-oriented research, this project has the following goals: To gather data about personality profiles of school personnel, to bring attention to the gender structure of school employment, and to provide information that will assist in career choices and enhance current educational practices.

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